

H1N1 and Companion Pets



Message Points for H1N1 and Companion Pets

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1. The novel “swine flu” (H1N1) has been a serious additional health concern for people during this current flu season.
2. Until recently, experts believed that, with the exception of birds and pet pigs, our pets were not susceptible to this virus. In fact, we don’t generally worry about our pets with any of the common seasonal flu strains.
3. Now, 2 cases of H1N1 in ferrets and a single cat that tested positive for the virus have shown that human transmission of the bug to our pets is possible.
4. So far, a ferret in Oregon tested positive as did a ferret in Nebraska who subsequently died. The 13 year old cat in Iowa who tested positive has recovered without incident. To date, no dogs have tested positive.
5. Currently, treatments for pets that contract H1N1 are supportive care and antibiotics. Like most people, it appears that this flu causes a mild illness in pets.
6. Veterinarians and the CDC will continue to monitor H1N1 in order to make sure pets and people stay protected.
7. At this time, there is not an H1N1 vaccine that has been approved for pets.
8. Veterinarians and public health experts continue to stress the importance of hand washing and remaining at home if you are sick.

9. Even though pets bring us lots of comfort, it is best to avoid sleeping or snuggling with your pets (especially ferrets) if you are ill.
10. Veterinarians are aware of the possible transmission of H1N1 to cats and ferrets. Your local animal hospital is best suited to care for your pet and prevent diseases, so don't be afraid to take your pet to the veterinarian if you are concerned.
11. At this time, this appears to be an isolated incident and the cat has recovered.
12. The Veterinary News Network will continue to monitor this potential concern and provide updates as needed.